

# TALMAGE IS DEAD.

MAY HE—"REST IN PEACE."

He had no peace of mind while living—always busy sending people, whom nature had not framed to think as he thought, to an everlasting, agonizing hell.

Now that he has gone to that blest abode of saints prepared before the foundations of the world, for such as he only, it may be he will simmer down and keep a quiet, consistent with the infinite peace of his ecstatic surroundings.

He has gone to his reward—the reward which he himself fixed for himself. He has his "mansions," the great "innumerable caravan" of the dead have their hell. Unfortunately, nature did not mould them after him.

He is happy. He has won the prize, because he was better than nine-tenths of humanity. He was more charitable, more benevolent, more self-sacrificing, more patient, more enduring, more loving, more forgiving, more meek and modest than the great mass of mankind. Where he has gone, they cannot go, because they are not like unto him. They are forever banished from the bliss of his bright smile and radiant companionship. He judged, and they judged not. Herein they were not wise. If men and women were as wide-awake and alive to their everlasting interests as they should be, they would drop their employments and all turn preachers and judges, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Talmage was so much better than the general run of humanity that he deserves the reward of an everlasting bliss, and the perpetual lease of a mansion of alabaster and pearl, amethyst, onyx and chalcidony. The only regrettable thing about this is, that since the last shall be judged first, he is not likely to come into full possession of his heavenly estate for a few million years.

Poor fellow! He worried himself fearfully while living about the beliefs of other people. His grief was always intensified because so many refused to follow him, and to pay him for telling them what he thought they ought to think.

He raged and despaired and poured a volume of adjectives and words sufficient to drown a continent, failed to incline the unrepentant. Then he raged and despaired and poured a volume of adjectives and words sufficient to drown a continent, failed to incline the unrepentant. Then he raged and despaired and poured a volume of adjectives and words sufficient to drown a continent, failed to incline the unrepentant.

But he has gone, alas, like the many, who have bloomed and blossomed in tropical Christendom; who have literally thrown away their lives picturing the joys of heaven and the agonies of hell, and in fretting over the indisposition of humanity to take their certificates of stock in either place.

This was the theological Talmage. The human Talmage was another man; and as such, let us consider him. I have always claimed that the last, final test of any man's character is the "money test"—how he makes and spends his money, and how he discharges all his money obligations. Let a man be honest in this respect and it matters but little what his religious or irreligious belief may be.

That Talmage preached for money, and that he was greedy and selfish to the core is well attested. One of his managers lately said in public print, that there was no getting along with him unless holding him down to an iron-bound contract; and even then there was always trouble. If the audiences were small, and the manager a loser, Talmage had nothing to say. But if the audiences were large, he would begin complaining at once that the manager was making too much money, and that he ought to have more than he was getting. He had absolutely no respect for his contract, and frequently his manager had to give him a percentage of his profits to keep him from throwing up on it altogether. But he was never willing to chip in for the manager's losses.

If this be true, it is enough for me. Talmage, always commanding a great salary, and a large lecture income, brazenly berated Ingersoll for "preaching for money." Ingersoll drew two thousand dollars houses, and he only two hundred, and the difference galled him.

He did not hesitate, in other particulars, to misrepresent Ingersoll, and even to lie openly about him. He never fairly represented or quoted scientific and Agnostic leaders. If he referred to Darwin or Spencer, he would quote their opinions of forty or fifty years ago, and not their recent conclusions. He would detach some of their statements, from their connecting ideas, and thus endeavor to deceive his hearers, by making it appear that

they indorsed Christianity by their own words. He would sort out, pick out and twist scientific propositions to suit his theological tenets. He was the persistent foe of evolution, and every new idea that did not accord with the crude opinions of the Bible writers. And no matter how much and how long he fought a new discovery, when it once became generally accepted, he would brazenly declare it a Christian discovery and in perfect accord with scriptures.

Intellectually, Talmage was without a conscience. He would pervert the truth and enlarge a lie, when ever it suited his purposes. He played upon the emotions of men and women by appealing to their superstitions, fears and prejudices. He was a master at word-painting, which the ignorant mistook for wisdom and logic. He was a flower garden, a cloud-soarer and a sky-scraper. He carried his hearers high up and set them down in entrancing realms of enraptured bliss. He made them feel good, and they liked it. He lifted them off the earth and stood them among the angels, and for a brief spell allowed them to feel the pressure of the crown upon their brows, smell the nosegays of heaven and finger the harp of a thousand strings.

He spent his whole life picturing, contemplating and howling about some other life. Never once did he turn to the great social problems which affect this life.

Kingdom Come, and Crowns and Glory and Jeweled Mansions and hosannas of the Heavenly Host, contrasted with the sulphurous flames and agonizing despair and moans and shrieks of the irretrievably damned, was the one monumental thought of his monstrous mind.

The vital questions affecting this life—the social reforms—the Single-Tax Proposition—Municipal Ownership—Trusts, Child Labor—Woman Suffrage, Strip-tease, Stock Gambling, and the purity of the ballot, were of little or no interest to him. This life was only to be despised. Heaven was his home. Save the body and feed the soul that a saint may be made, was his one teaching. If poverty demoralized the masses, why poverty should be accepted as a blessing; for was not Christ poor, and the apostles poor, and have ye not the poor with ye always?

This doctrine, however, did not apply to himself. When he published a book he bargained for the biggest royalty. When he preached and lectured he looked out for bargains. The Christ he worshipped preached for nothing. He commanded from one to three hundred dollars a night for lecturing, and sometimes his houses were so poor that his manager, or the society which employed him suffered a loss; but did he divide the loss? Not he.

He entered into a contract with a syndicate of newspapers to print his sermons. From this source he derived an immense income.

He was a Christian. He was literally soaked with Christian love and charity. It oozed out of every pore. He stored up whole vats of divine sweat, and sold the precious elixir at the highest price.

He always had a place to lay his head—the best the earth could afford. He is now instructing Jesus how deficient he was in business principles. What with his preaching and royalty on his books, and income from the newspaper syndicate; he made from twenty to forty thousand dollars a year. The Cincinnati Enquirer which has printed his sermons for years places his minimum income at twenty thousand.

About two years ago I submitted a reply to one of Talmage's sermons, in which he had grossly misrepresented and lied about Freethought to the editor of the Enquirer. He refused to print it, not because of lack of truth and merit, but because it would offend—the truth would offend. In further conversation with the editor he said: "You are on the wrong track. Why don't you know that Talmage is doing more for Freethought than you can ever possibly do? His fanaticism and liberalism are making liberals by the thousands. He is the biggest d—n fraud in the country, and one of the most grasping and avaricious men in the pulpit. He is out for 'the stuff' like the most of them, and this is plain to every one who looks deeper than the surface. While he mystifies many, and strengthens them in their prejudices and superstitions, his evident fanaticism, greed and hypocrisy, opens the eyes of as many others. It is just like patent medicines, a great many people want to be fooled. We put their advertisement in our paper for the money in it, and to please that class of fools; and likewise print Talmage for the money in it and to please his class of fools. A newspaper is compelled, more or less, to give the people what they want, you know."

Here you have the secret of Talmage's success. He knew how to reach the ignorant mob. He was a bigger fraud than the thousands of others who make a commercialism of Christianity, only as he knew how to jostle and fool the crowd; only as an angler is skilled in getting suckers to grab at his bait.

As to Talmage's private and domestic life, I never heard anything to his detriment, and if I did know anything

I would say nothing about it.

His public life, only should be public property. He was married three times, which would indicate his belief that God only joins people for this life and death here sunders them. If marriage is sacred, why should it not be for all time as well as now?

Criticism is fair only when both sides are given. It will be interesting, therefore, to give the views of the great religious papers, upon the career of Mr. Talmage.

The Independent (N. Y.) says: "He was the typical sensational preacher, having the merits and faults of his class, doing some miscellaneous good, but leaving behind him no permanent value of influence."

The Congregationalist (Boston) says: "He drew large audiences using sensational methods. He found a ready market for his sermons, which were prepared to appear as extemporaneous utterances, and sold in advance to a syndicate of newspapers."

The Christian Advocate (N. Y.) says of his pulpit methods: "He was extraordinary and spectacular, a mountebank and mere verbal trickster."

Other Christian journals express like utterances, but the majority, of course, credit him with sincere convictions, and deep piety; and as having done more good than any preacher of his time.

The general public do not know that when he went to the Holy Land, he had prepared his sermons before leaving, and sold them to the newspapers. They appeared regularly in many papers in the United States every Monday morning, announced as having been received fresh by cable just as they were delivered in Jerusalem, Nazareth and other places.

He thus permitted himself to become a party to a lie, and such action tends to confirm the truth of the charges made against him by his own Presbytery of LYING. This was twenty-five years ago, and now forgotten by most people. In the trial which took place, the charges were not sustained. Charges of any kind against preachers, even plain cases of wife-killing—seldom are sustained. But in this case against Talmage, the final vote was nearly equally divided—as near perhaps as a Presbytery ever comes to convicting a preacher. For heresy—for expressing an honest thought, a Presbytery will jump all over a presumptuous parson, but such inconsequential offenses as LYING, BORG-ERY, SEDUCTION and WIFE-KILLING seldom trouble the ministerial conscience.

It is most remarkable that a man can stand so prominently before the public for years, retaining its confidence and respect, doing all the time the very things he preached against; preaching the beauties of truth, and love of enemies, while lying himself by misrepresenting and vilifying them; preaching the blessings of poverty, as seen in Christ and the fishermen, while massing riches of his own; raging against the money changers, while pooling his sermons, and giving them to the people, as having been delivered in Jerusalem, when they were not.

Talmage's will just made public shows that he left an estate of \$300,000.

Talmageism and Dowieism are but mild examples of the religious buncolism going on all the time. Millions of dollars are filched from the people through the belief that the words and prayers of a preacher make sacred the marriage tie. Tens of millions are likewise annually stolen for masses for the repose of the souls of the dead. Unknown and uncountable millions are dumped into the hands of the clergy, as conscience money, by the inculcation of the fear of an imaginary hell. Many other religious hold-ups, as bold and plain as daylight, highway robbery, are made all the time; and still the suckers bite.

A few years after going to Brooklyn his church burned to the ground. A much larger one having the capacity of 3,000 was built. Twelve years after this church burned to the ground. A still larger church, seating 5,000 was erected. Three years after this church was completely destroyed by fire, and the fires getting too hot for him he quit Brooklyn and went to Washington.

It was singular that none of these churches met with partial destruction, but every one of them, like Sodom and Gomorrah, were completely destroyed.

The origin of the fires was never known. Some have attributed them to the carelessness of Jehovah, whose attention had been directed too exclusively to bird-gazing and hair counting.

Other rude and profane people, attributed the cause to the failure of the janitor to ventilate the church after one of Talmage's red hot sermons—the general torridity confined within, causing spontaneous combustion.

In all Christendom there had never been a Tabernacle of the Lord, impregnated with so much hell-fire and Hosannah as these, and just why God should have neglected or withheld his fostering care over them, is one of those mysterious dispensations of Providence, it hath not been given to the sceptic to understand.

In some respects Talmage was a great man. There was something in his

make-up which impressed and swayed the common and average mind. There was a superior something about him to have enabled him to command public attention. What was it?

It was not personal magnetism nor oratory nor logic, nor intellectual predominance. He was neither teacher, thinker, investigator nor discoverer. He trod the beaten path. He lived in the dead past, and in dreams of a fantastical future. What was his power?

In my opinion it was that of the quack advertiser, whose success depends not upon the virtue of his drugs, but rather upon his harrowing descriptions of disease and its blighting effects, following the same with sweet and soothing songs of hope, and the most eloquent intoxicating assurance that he, and he only, "can cure when all others fail." People like to be led into despair and then snatched out of it.

Talmage would drop his listeners into the lowest hell, and then snatch them out and send them off to glory. And such pictures as he could draw. Therein lay his power—in the all-persuasive power of speech. "Syllables govern the world."

His was the same power which made Milton, Young and Pollock great in their day—the power to depict the horrors and despairs of hell, in contrast with the joys and exultations of heaven.

No one reads either of these three poets today. They are remembered only for here and there a stray ode, or an apostrophe, or a bit of fine descriptive verse, touching upon some majestic view of nature.

Their heaven and hell and spirits celestial and goblins damned, and embattled hosts no longer sway the mind of man. But for a long time they, with Dryden, Dante and other morbid mumbler of their kind, held literary supremacy over the world; proving most conclusively the power of language, especially when eloquence throws its charm over the unknowable, the mysterious, the superstitious, the horrible, the appalling, the dreamful and the paradisaical.

Talmage was a spasmodic revival of Milton, Pollock and Dante. He could make heaven as enchanting and hell as hot, even hotter than they. So vivid and lurid were his descriptions that it would seem that he must have visited both places and saw what he described.

The architecture of heaven was his hobby. He never tired of telling of the grandeur and composition of the "mansions," and never failed to specify the precious metals, stones and jewels which entered into their construction and how they shone in the luminous light of the throne.

And it just made every one feel good all over to think that they were going to live forever in beautiful mansions of light, just like he described. And it further added to their exhilaration and ecstasy, to hear him describe the angelic hosts, and their entrancing flights, and mid-air hosannas around the throne where sitteth the Lamb, and the apostles and patriarch and all the HE sheep who walked with God. And the crystal rivers which flowed without a wave scintillated like concentrated star-light, and the flowers which grew upon the banks were so brilliant and exotic, that only an angel could look upon them and smell them and live; and the mansions and temples multitudinous, rose, terrace upon terrace, their walls built of alabaster, jasper and pearl, surmounted by countless domes and minarets, set with diamonds, sapphires, emeralds and rubies, the least of which was bigger than a light house. And myriad towers of solid sunshine pierced the infinite azure; and around these mighty columns wound stairs of bright, blue light, extracted from the lightning's dash; and far, far up their dazzling steps, hosts of angels—

Each brighter far,  
Than tower or stair,  
Unceasing sang 'Hosannah to the Highest.'"

The illuminations at Buffalo were not a circumstance. The above extravagance is something after Talmage's style. What religiously led mind but would be carried away with such eloquence, and dreaming, and celestial word-painting? His trick was to get them under the spell of his speech, and it then became easy to get their money and praise.

Yes, there lay his power—the power of words—the charm of expression. Logic and common sense never count against poetry and painting—that is with the common herd.

I do not mean to condemn Talmage for being a word-painter. I do a little of this myself; but I stop—when I reach the stars. I do not go beyond the visible and the knowable. But Talmage punctured the infinite and painted the Blest Beyond, and especially in speech. Let us garland our minds with the beautiful—with the beautiful things we see in this life.

But let it be only for the sake of the Beautiful—not to deceive and mystify by throwing a charm over superstition. Let me go down among the clover, and write of boyhood's blissful June. Let me gather the hare-bell, and picture baby's eyes. Let me pluck the wild rose, and dream again of early love. Let me go out among the garden flowers, and call to memory mother dear.

Let the roses of speech garland this life, and let them adorn it now; and let us not throw all our bouquets at the angels.

By his word-paintings, Ruskin lifted art to a higher pinnacle of appreciation. He wrote of the beautiful things of this life, and art fled from the sanctuary, and took to the fields.

By his word-paintings, Ingersoll threw a charm over round peasant lovers, as hand in hand, they wandered wooing o'er the vine-clad hills. The hour, he transformed into a glorified palace by the lattice-shadow, which checked the cradled babe within. He did not spend his time picturing the angels and mansions beyond the gates ajar, but the loves of this life, and the good in the heart of man.

And it was this love and expression of the beautiful in Nature and Humanity, which strengthened and ennobled the speech of Ruskin and Ingersoll, and which, too, was the secret of their charm and power. And this too was the secret of Talmage's power.

But unlike them, he painted super-nature—not what he saw, but what he

imagined; not men, but angels; the illusionary, the unreal, the fantastical, the brightness of Heaven, and the blackness of Hell.

And it was thus he bewitched the bo-tiddled believer.

I respect the preacher who tries to tell the truth, who depicts things as they are; who gives his honest and best judgment upon every topic of interest to human welfare and understanding. Warped with prejudice and superstition—their minds narrowed and contracted by a stupid illogical, unscientific belief, most clergymen do the best they know how, and are honest in their aims and purposes; and for such I have respect.

But Talmage never tried to tell the truth. It was not in him to represent either science and unbelief fairly and honestly. About this he would lie outright. Not only this, but he would abuse and vilify, and call bad names, and exaggerate. In fact he exaggerated in everything. His pictures of heaven were no greater exaggeration than his misrepresentations of unbelief.

Some years ago, I read in one of his sermons, in which he was lashing some of the wicked—these words—"I think I can hear their horse's hoofs clattering down the plains of Hell."

Just pause, in your chuckle, and contemplate the vindictiveness, intolerance and morbidity of the mind which could conceive such a thought, and paint such a picture. Even horses in hell! Talmage had a mind of great comprehension and scope. He explored the literature, art and history of the past, but closed his thoughts to the developments of the present. He would not investigate science and conflicting beliefs, nor tolerate opposition.

He could talk intelligently upon nearly every thing except religion. Upon this one subject, he evidenced all the symptoms of insanity. Upon this subject, he was unfeeling, hateful, vindictive inhuman, exaggerative, sensational, unreasoning, fantastical and preposterous. But all these joined to mystery and emotionalism catch the gaping crowd.

I have been told by those who met him in private that he was a most charming conversationalist, affable, easy to approach, full of anecdote and reminiscence, and even broad and tolerant in his religious talk.

This was Talmage in private. In public he was another man.

There is no MONEY in public broadness and tolerance. We Liberals find that out. Greenbacks don't grow on Liberal bushes.

There has been no man in the modern pulpit so windy, sensational, bigoted, blatant and boisterous, or who has cursed and damned humanity for the sins which nature has imposed upon it, and made unavoidable, as this man Talmage, nor one who has made so much money out of his mouthings. It always seemed to me that Talmage would be the most out-of-place angel that ever fluttered its feathers in Paradise. It's so quiet and peaceful there. The change will be so sudden. He can't rage and damn any more. There are no storms there—nothing but aromatic zephyrs, and he'll surely go crazy when he, no longer, has hell to think about. He saw and pictured heaven so often while living, it won't be any novelty to him when he gets there. Of course it will be a pleasing diversion for a few thousand years talking to Abe and Mose and Dave and Dan and Pete and Paul, and the many others whose teachings inspired his caloric contributions to present day piety.

But it takes a long stretch of the imagination to associate Talmage with the Peace of Heaven.

There is a touch of sadness in the mis-spent life of this man. Unbalanced, he was, undoubtedly. He looked long upon the one subject, that most probably he came to believe his own talk. When one faculty of the mind, especially if that faculty be an emotional one—such as the religious, is continually stimulated, and so exercised that it dominates every other faculty, you see a one-sided man. From this tendency, most clergymen are more or less off. Mental equilibrium depends upon diversity of thought and avoidance of morbid emotionalism; upon the exhilaration and stimulation of discovery, rather than sacred adherence to the antiquated and worn out.

Here we see a man of really great talents clinging to the cruel dogmas of a barbarous age; arresting the mind of childhood and chaining it to the past, directing their thoughts to some other life, instead of preparing them for the duties and responsibilities of this life; poisoning them with prejudice and embittering them with religious conceit, intolerance and cruelty.

Such an education of great talents, to me is a sad spectacle. It is all right to talk somewhat of Heaven, and contemplate a future home of happiness for those we have loved and lost, but we cannot add to their happiness, we can do them no good—why bother about them, on the luxury of their habitations or the kind of flowers and the music they have there?

This life is here; and ignorance, and disease and despair and injustice are all about us; and millions have no habitations, and starved eyes never see a flower.

How can any sane mind wrap itself up in ecstasy and exultation over the bliss of the angels in heaven, when this earth is choked with sorrowing ones, who should hold the first kindred claim upon every person of superior talents. Had Talmage turned his talents to the social, economical and governmental problems which affect humanity today; had he pictured the heaven that could be made on this earth by simple justice between man and man, had he raged against militarism and the purchase and enslavement of men; had he damned stock gambling, trusts and the corruption of the ballot; had he loudly advocated the enfranchisement of women—ecclesiastical as well as political; had he everlastingly advocated the gospel of health and the morals of good breeding,—he would have added to the glory and good and happiness of this life, and justly earned the reward of another. But he didn't do this. He just preached Jesus and Him crucified, and made all the money he could out of it, and lived in such luxury and adulation here, that why he should ever want to go to heaven, is beyond my understanding.

I would not intentionally do injus-

tice to any man living or dead. I do not want to be, and I hope have not been uncharitable in thus commenting upon the life of Mr. Talmage. He was a public man. He published his gospel for a price, Jesus didn't. He submitted his opinions and himself to the public criticism; and he, himself was profuse in his public criticisms of both the living and the dead. Therefore I feel privileged to speak as I have, and I have aimed to speak truly. If I have spoken with humor, it was because Talmage himself was amusing.

And I say it in all seriousness, meaning no disrespect to him, nor offense to his friends, that THE WORLD IS WORSE FOR HIS HAVING LIVED IN IT, AND IS BETTER OFF THAT HE IS GONE OUT OF IT.

There is only one redeeming thing connected with the teachings of his unfeeling, corrupt and demoralizing doctrines—that is their very extravagance, hyperbole, cruelty, self proclaimed judgment, inconsistency, sensationalism and conceit, often had the opposite effect intended, and resulted in opening the eyes of the more thoughtful, and leading thousands into the ranks of Rationalism. But the harm he did, out weighed the good, and the world is better off without him.

However, he serves for a useful lesson. No other preacher in all the world has been given such newspaper attention and it is significant that in proportion to the advertisement given him and Moody and Sam Jones and all that sensational class of Christian ranters, Agnosticism and other Liberal views have correspondingly gained entry into the press.

Everything he despised and raged against—Evolution, infidelity, Atheism and Socialism have advanced with giant strides.

He died a played-out man. He lasted much longer than Jones, whose vulgarity, coarse-scolding and hell-fredness was of brief duration. These examples should be a lesson to Christian teachers, revealing to them that something more than abuse and social ostracism, and the threat of future punishment and sanctified quackery, and mystified numery is essential to capture this intelligent age and hold it for Christ—and themselves.

And after all his publishing of books, and preaching and lecturing and newspaper advertisement—what has Talmage written or said that will be remembered? Nothing.

He stood "for angels." Henry George stood "for men." And without having written the one thousandth part of the matter written by Talmage—he will live and be loved in the hearts of men, because he stood "for men." To occupy such exalted position—to command the attention Talmage did before the world, would seem a fame to be envied by any man. But in my mind the humblest teacher of Free Thought and Social Equality is "King of men" beside him. The work and good they do will count in the long run. They stand for men.

Unknown and unnoticed—without ever a hope of commanding the public gaze, I would rather realize that I had sown the seeds of mental liberty in the brain of one bright child, who will give his genius to all humanity, lifting the sorrowing out of their poverty and mental enslavement, thus securing Democratic institutions to the world and peace and happiness to men, and all—FREE! FREE! FREE! I would rather make his forty thousand dollars a year, buncing the ignorant, darkening and misdirecting the minds of childhood, placing foot-falls in the path of progress, and by such duplicity enjoying a world-wide fame.

Let me live to enlighten those in whom the spark of thought burns dim; to give them my best judgment without a price; to help those I do not know, and whom I can never know; to sow the seeds of liberty of thought and speech which may blossom in generations unborn; this to me is more than the enlarged sphere of Talmage; more than ease and luxury; more than the adulation of bigotry; more than the renown of Saint or Bishop, or Primate or Pope; more than hob-nobbing with the royal monsters who shackle the brains and bodies of men.

J. B. WILSON, M. D., Cincinnati.

## BRO. INKSINGER

Likes the B. G. B. and Wants to "X."

Chico, Texas, April 19, 1902.

Charles C. Moore, Esq., Eminent Heathen, Lexington, Ky.

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